



June 7, 2012

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Hon. Tim Burgess, Chair
Governance Performance and
Finance Committee
Seattle City Council
Seattle, WA.

Dear Mr. Burgess:

Marine cargo was one of Seattle's unsung economic success stories in the first decade of the 21st Century.

Port of Seattle marine cargo volumes grew by 40% over the past 10 years. That trend helped drive related job and revenue growth that was documented by Martin Associates through an on-going survey that collects economic data from hundreds of port tenants. According to the Martin survey, container growth helped drive marine job growth by 30% to 12,481 while cargo sector business revenues doubled to \$3 billion annually, generating 143% growth in related local and state government revenues that in 2007 amounted to \$254 million

By contrast, according to the Puget Sound Regional Council, private sector employment in Seattle dropped by 44,000 jobs since the year 2,000.

Maintaining the health, competitiveness and future growth potential of Seattle marine cargo should be major factors in reviewing the proposal for a third SODO sports arena.

Transportation issues will be key to determining how or if a third arena can be integrated into SODO. The Manufacturing Industrial Council finds that the *Seattle Arena Multimodal Transportation Access and Parking Study* falls short in fostering the type of review that the Seattle community requires. These are among our concerns.

1. Impact on Port of Seattle operations.

On page 1 of the Executive Summary, the arena report makes the following assertion:

The majority of event traffic would be on 1st Avenue and roadways to the east. The majority of Port of Seattle operations involve moving freight between container terminals and railyards which are located west of 1st Avenue South. Therefore, Port of Seattle operations are effectively separated from event traffic.

This is highly misleading.

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Trucks carrying containers traveling on 1st Avenue South and other roads east of 1st account for 30% to 40% of marine cargo import operations and 50% of export container traffic. These trucks are the driving reality behind state, regional, local, public and private efforts over the past 15 years to mitigate the transportation impacts of the two existing SODO stadiums.

This truck traffic should be a main focus in assessing impacts of a third sports facility on marine cargo. No such assessment is or will be possible if it is not acknowledged that these trucks exist and are key to port operations

2. Daytime traffic impacts of night events.

On page 10, under “Auto Access,” the report states that:

Regional routes such as I-5, I-90 and SR-99 are heavily used by people driving to the stadium (sic) and become congested during larger events. These routes access the parking facilities that most directly serve CenturyLink, Safeco Field and the proposed arena parking. These routes experience higher than normal congestion during weekday evening commute times between 3 PM and 7 PM.”

The freeway congestion demonstrates that evening events in SODO have daytime traffic impacts.

The same holds true for local traffic within SODO, as documented by the City of Seattle *South Holgate Street Railroad Crossing Study* published in 2010. The Holgate study included traffic counts to compare traffic levels between days with evening events and those without them. Traffic counts showed that on days concluding with evening events, traffic began to grow above normal levels at noon, with a significant rise from 2-4 p.m. The study covered night games at Safeco Field that drew about 26,000 people each.

This trend is due at least in part to the number of truck drivers and other commercial travelers who schedule trips to SODO earlier in the day to avoid the traffic congestion created by the convergence of arena patrons. This change in traffic adds to workday congestion in SODO. The arena report makes no mention of the Holgate study.

3. Increasing Weekday Events

The arena transportation report estimates that a third arena will increase the number of SODO weekdays with evening events from 72 to 133. That’s an increase of 85%. Presently, about 28% of all weekdays conclude with an evening event in SODO. With a third arena, more than 50% of all weekdays will include an evening event.

As demonstrated by the 3 p.m. freeway congestion and the Holgate traffic survey, this will increase the number of days and the periods of time in which daytime truck trips and freight operations are impacted by evening entertainment events.

4. Impacts of Traffic Congestion

Metro cancelled bus service on 1st Avenue South in the stadium area more than one year ago because it was no longer possible to operate dependable bus service amid the traffic congestion that now occurs at locations such as the intersection of 1st Avenue South and Atlantic Street in the heart of the stadium area. Much of the present congestion is due to construction activity related to the Alaskan Way Viaduct. But the supplemental EIS for the deep bore tunnel finds that traffic congestion will continue at high levels in the area after the tunnel is completed as more motorists use 1st and 4th Avenues to travel to and from south downtown Seattle. The EIS projects that congestion levels in the morning will reach a D level of service at the intersection of 1st and Atlantic. Afternoon traffic will reach level F.

Metro has the option of cancelling bus service when faced with such congestion. Truck drivers, shipping companies and terminal operators don't have that option. Unlike Metro, however, they can opt to move their business to ports where congestion is not so such a frequent barrier to daily business operations.

5. Bus Service for Night Events

The *Seattle Arena* report claims on page 12 that "After 10 p.m. there are 48 buses passing through the stadium district for (arena) patrons to use, including buses on the Alaskan Way Viaduct. This provides capacity for approximately 3,800 people."

This claim is not documented in the study and we can find no other documentation for it elsewhere.

According to Metro and Sound Transit web sites, only 34 buses drive through SODO between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. Seven make no stops in SODO. Only 12 stop within a half mile of the proposed arena. Only 673 riders could fit on these 12 buses – if the buses were empty. And, they aren't. Neither Metro nor Sound Transit operate bus routes for long if no one is using them.

Fifteen additional buses serve stops from a half-mile to one mile away from the arena. Eight more stop more than a mile from the arena. Even if people were willing to walk to these stops at night and the buses were empty – which they aren't – all buses now available in SODO at or near 10 p.m. would fall far short of serving 3,800 more riders.

6. Transit Service

Regional expansions in the Link Light Rail system will not change that the two SODO light rail stations are both located more than two-thirds of a mile away from the proposed arena. That's a significant distance for pedestrians to cover, especially for people attending events after dark during winter weather.

7. SODO Pedestrian Conditions

SODO presents many challenging circumstances for pedestrians. These are documented in an extensive community study that was performed by the MIC affiliate group, the Duwamish Transportation Management Association. The report, *Street Smart: Alternatives to Drive-Alone Commuting in the Duwamish*, was published in January 2012, prior to the announcement of the third arena proposal. The study is available online at www.duwamishtma.org. The online version of *Street Smart* includes a second study by the TMA from 2008 that focused on safety issues specific to 1st Avenue South, the main thoroughfare in the stadium area.

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Both of these studies were developed with stakeholders representing freight, retailers, stadium operators, Feet First and the Cascade Bicycle Club.

These efforts identified the pedestrian challenges in SODO created by poor or no sidewalks, poor drainage resulting in epic mud puddles, large trucks, inattentive motorists, infrequent bus service, inadequate bus stops, and lack of access to light rail services because of the long distances between the SODO light rail stations and most SODO area worksites.

All of these issues were highlighted by people who frequent SODO during daylight hours on weekdays. Like the *Seattle Arena* report, the TMA studies failed to account for the added challenges imposed by nighttime winter weather conditions.

8. SODO road network

The capacity of local roads to serve the marine cargo terminals on Elliott Bay is significantly constrained by the small number of east-west roads that connect the waterfront with access to 1st Avenue South, and the intermodal conflicts created by north-south railroad operations that frequently block east-west traffic.

Mitigation plans for the two existing stadiums and the rest of north SODO were predicated on construction of three major overpasses to carry east-west traffic over the railroad tracks to enable port-bound trucks to travel between and around the stadiums. These three overpasses were incorporated during the 1990s into the regional Freight Action Strategy for the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma (FAST) Corridor Project. They were also the top three transportation priorities identified through the City of Seattle Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center plan process.

For a variety of reasons, the road mitigation plan was not completed.

The major overpass planned for Royal Brougham Blvd. north of Safeco Field was reduced to a local connector that is now nicknamed the “Pigtail.” In spite of its origin as a major freight project, the Royal Brougham overpass is so limited for freight it cannot legally be used by trucks that approach it south-bound on 4th Avenue South.

The reduced capacity of the Pigtail shifted so much traffic to the Atlantic overpass south of Safeco Field that it resulted in the major bottleneck at 1st and Atlantic that now precludes effective bus service and will continue after the deep bore tunnel is complete.

The third overpass, at Lander Street, remains in the city capital plan at an estimated cost of \$180 million to \$200 million. Local funds for this project were transferred in 2008 to support the two-way Mercer Project which will run from Seattle Center to Interstate 5.

The new road projects that are still planned or recently completed in SODO are welcome additions, but they were designed for an industrial business community that was planned to support two stadiums, not three.

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9. Growth Prospects

The arena developer is candid in media interviews that he intends to seek a different land use pattern in SODO. Such a change would require major public investments not only in SODO road ways, but pedestrian amenities, bus and transit services, environmental remediation and other upgrades.

The *Seattle Arena* report fails to acknowledge these transformative plans or the potential public costs of fulfilling them. It also fails to account for the Port of Seattle "Century 21" planning effort underway since 2008 that calls for continued growth in the port's seaport operations.

An entertainment facility envisioned by a private developer should not be allowed to compromise the competitiveness of Seattle's marine cargo sector.

Please call if I can answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave Gering". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dave" being more legible than the last name "Gering".

Dave Gering, Executive Director
Manufacturing Industrial Council of Seattle

Cc: Seattle City Council